(b) Does not arise.

(c) The basic objective of the public private partnership initiatives is to strengthen the Railway's infrastructure and improve services to customers. These do not entail any dilution of the public sector character of Railways and compromise of Government's interests.

The guidelines and interministerial appraisal/approval laid down by Government in this regard are fully adhered to.

Agreement between Indian railways and Iran's railway company

1375. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Wili the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Iran have signed an agreement that would help establish a new rail link between Iran and Russia;

(b) if so, whether MoU was signed by the Chairman, Indian Railway Board and Iran's Railway Company; and

(c) if so, what are main features of the agreement reached and by when it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Gauge conversion

1376. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has undertaken the work of gauge conversion in different States; and

(b) if so, how many railway lines would be converted into broad gauge during Eleventh Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Target for gauge conversion of 10000 Km of meter gauge / narrow gauge lines to broad gauge has been fixed for XI Plan.

World class railway stations and budget hotels

1377. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Railways has announced for developing world class stations in the country in the identified railway land;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) is developing budget hotels on idle railway land in the country;